

# Bhāra Sutta

## The Discourse of the Burden

(Saṃyutta Nikāya - Khandha Saṃyutta)

The main purpose of Buddhist teachings is to point out the cause of suffering and the cessation of suffering. The Buddha discovered, analyzed and proclaimed the nature of life and the solution of our problems. Buddha clearly explains that the Buddha and his sublime truth shine in the world because of three reasons those are decay, death and rebirth. Those are main challenges in our lives. The Buddha discovered, analyzed and proclaimed the path that leads to getting rid of above challenges for the liberation of beings. If someone understands the suffering, he realizes the origin of suffering. If someone realizes the origin of suffering, he comprehends the cessation of suffering. If someone understands the cessation of suffering, he goes forward on the path that leads to getting rid of suffering according to his effort, dedication, wisdom and capacity that he practiced spiritual faculties in his previous lives. When one step of four noble truths is realized by a wise person, other steps are also understood.

In the Bhara Sutta, the discourse of burden, the Buddha points out the main problem in our life and how to overcome it.

*“bhāraṇca vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi bhārahāraṇca bhārādānaṇca bhāra-nikkhepa-naṇca.*

Bhikkhus (Monks), I will show you the burden /weight (*Bhāro*), the carrier of the burden, the taking up of the burden, and the laying down of the burden. Listen to that....

### 1. The Burden (*Bhāro*)

Here the Buddha first explains what the burden is.

*Katamo ca, bhikkhave, bhāro? Pañcu-pādā-nak-khan-dhā tissa vacanīyaṃ.*

*Katame pañca? Rūpupā-dā-nak-khan-dho, vedanupā-dā-nak-khan-dho, saññu-pādā-nak-khan-dho, sañ-khā-ru-pādā-nak-khan-dho, viñ-ñāṇupā-dā-nak-khan-dho; ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhāro.*

And what, bhikkhus, is the burden? It should be said: the five aggregates subject to clinging. What five? The form aggregate subject to clinging, the feeling aggregate subject to clinging, the perception aggregate subject to clinging, the volitional formations aggregate subject to clinging, the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. This is called the burden.

At the beginning of the Dhammacakka sutta, the Buddha explains all kinds of sufferings in the primary level. They are birth (*Jati* - ජාති පි දුක්ඛා), aging (*Jara* - ජරා පි දුක්ඛා), sickness (*Vyadhi* - ව්‍යාධි පි දුක්ඛා), death (*Marana* - මරණ මි පි දුක්ඛං), union with what is displeasing (*Appiyasampayoga* - අප්පියෙහි සම්පයෝගෝ දුක්ඛෝ), separation from what is pleasing (*Piyavippayoga* - පියෙහි විප්පයෝගෝ දුක්ඛෝ) and not to get what one wants (*Yampiccam na labhati tampi dukkham* - යම්පිච්ඡං න ලබති තම්පි දුක්ඛං). These are the unpleasant situations those we dislike in our life. When

they come to our life, we suffer, worry, upset, lament or get angry. According to Buddhism, all of these sufferings depend on ignorance about five aggregates. That is why, finally, the Buddha says "In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering" (*Samkittenapanupadanakkhanda dukkha* - සංවිත්තේන පඤ්චුපාදානක්ඛන්ධා දුක්ඛා). First seven things are not difficult to understand as suffering. Anybody, who is wise, can understand that they cause suffering. The especial reason of suffering that is never understood without a Buddha's advice is the nature of five aggregates.

The five aggregates are;

1. The corporeality group or matter (*Rupakkhanda*)
2. The feeling group (*Vedanākkhanda*)
3. The perception group (*Saññākkhanda*)
4. The mental- formation group (*Sankārakkhanda*)
5. The consciousness group (*Viññānakkhanda*)

Understanding of five aggregates leads to understanding of all suffering as it is. Matter means four fundamental elements and its 24 derived corporeal phenomena which depend on four primary physical elements. Feelings mean sensation which arises according to six senses. Perception which recognizes feelings also arises according to six senses. Mental formation means creating volitions according to six sense experience. Consciousness means knowing the experience.

According to Buddhism the five aggregates is all our experience in our whole life. These five things are discussed together because they cannot be divided. These five arise together and cease together. Therefore we get it as one. Buddhism says that the main reason of suffering is unknowing of these five aggregates and attachment or clinging to it. That is why Buddhism has discussed lots about this and how to overcome it. All Buddhist doctrines focus on understanding of five aggregates which causes to overcome suffering.

We get all experience in our life through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. We have no experience except through those six senses. If we have some sort of experience as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or knowing objects, it means five aggregates arise. When we see something, hear something, smell something, taste something, touch something or think of something, it means not only five aggregates arise together but they cease together at the moment.

## 2. The carrier of the burden (*Bhārahāro*)

Next the Buddha explains who carries the burden. The person who takes five aggregates with ignorance carries the burden.

*Katamo ca, bhikkhave, bhārahāro? Puggalo tissa vacanīyaṃ. Yvāyaṃ āyasmā evaṃnāmo evaṅgotto; ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhārahāro.*

And what, bhikkhus, is the carrier of the burden? It should be said: the person, this venerable one of such a name and clan. This is called the carrier of the burden.

When someone experiences something through his senses, if he thinks suffering or happiness arises because of outside persons or things, he is ignorant. Then his mind is fixed in outside and he is not away from suffering. He has to carry what he experienced as a heavy weight or burden.

### 3. The taking up of the burden (Bhārādānaṃ)

The taking up of the burden is the craving or greed

*Katamañca, bhikkhave, bhārādānaṃ? Yāyaṃ tañhā ponobhavikā nandī-rāga-saha-gatā tatra-tat-rā-bhinan-dinī, seyyathidaṃ—kāmatañhā, bhavatañhā, vibhavatañhā. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhārādānaṃ.*

And what, bhikkhus, is the taking up of the burden? It is this craving that leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination. This is called the taking up of the burden.

If someone gets something with ignorance, craving arises. The close reason of suffering is craving, and the main root of suffering is ignorance. Craving arises because of non-knowing of the cause and effect (the dependent origination). Even though people enjoy sensual pleasures they are not away from suffering until they understand the causality that the Buddha pointed out. If someone can understand this reality listening to the Buddha's message, he tries to overcome ignorance and liberate from suffering laying down the burden.

### 4. The laying down of the burden (Bhāra-nikkhepana)

And what, bhikkhus, is the laying down of the burden? It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it. This is called the laying down of the burden.”

*Katamañca, bhikkhave, bhāra-nikkhepa-naṃ? Yo tassāyeva tañhāya asesa-virāga-nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhāra-nikkhepa-nan”ti.*

According to the conventional truth there are people, things etc., but according to the ultimate truth we have only above five aggregates which is the world reality. This is also not permanent. Every moment it arises and ceases, but because of ignorance we think they are permanent. When we experience something through our senses, we may think before we experience it was here and after experience it will remain. This misconception causes suffering. If a person can

understand as it is, he can overcome suffering. To overcome suffering he has to develop mindfulness and wisdom.

Mindfulness can be divided into four as

1. Contemplation of matter (*Kāyanupassanā*)
2. Contemplation of feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
3. Contemplation of consciousness (*Cittānupassanā*)
4. Contemplation of mental formations (*Dhammānupassanā*)

When we concentrate our mind according to these four, we can understand the nature of our all experience about mind and matter as arising and disappearing. With concentrated mind we can reflect all things as impermanent, suffering and egoless. Then we can decrease the attachment, clinging, craving or desire about the world. And gradually we can overcome anger and delusion too. This real understanding causes to get rid of suffering. It means we are on the way of real happiness which is the bottom line in our lives. Buddhism explains this message to all persons in every level, because this is the most important topic in Buddhism.

Understanding of the dependent origination (*Patīccasamuppāda*) depends on understanding of the five aggregates. If we have some sort of experience through our senses, it means five aggregates arise together and they cease together at the same moment. It is instant. As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. This is the highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence. If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. When we experience through our senses about the world, these five aggregates arise together. They can't be separated. As the result of arising of these five things, we have an experience. These five aggregates suddenly arise and also cease instantly. When we experience something, they have not only arisen but ceased also. When we experience something through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue or body, these five senses can't get pleasure or pain. As soon as those experiences ceased instantly, we get pleasure or pain in the sense of mind as a past experience. However, we think that we experience in the present because of ignorance. That is why we suffer. If we can understand that these five aggregates arise and cease at the moment with the condition, we are able to understand its impermanence. Then we know we have nothing to desire or hate. It means we have overcome suffering. As much as we have this understanding and reflecting on it in every moment, we have liberated from unsatisfactoriness.

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not

come to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අනුත්වා සම්භුතං හුත්වා න භවිස්සති). If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is	( <i>Asmin sati idam hoti</i> )
This arising, that arises	( <i>Imassa Uppādā idam uppajjati</i> )
When this is not, that is not	( <i>Asmin asati idam na hoti</i> )
This ceasing, that ceases	( <i>Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati</i> )

Understanding of Buddhism depends on how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has clear knowledge, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding of suffering causes us to understand the four noble truths. If someone knows suffering as lack of knowledge of this theory, listening to what the Buddha taught he tries to understand the dependent origination, five aggregates and four noble truths as much as he can. And also he always tries to practice the path to get rid of suffering. Here he has to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue (*Seela*)
2. Tranquility (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

First of all, he disciplines his physical and verbal actions with the knowledge of the dependent origination. Having a good discipline in speech and behavior, he gradually trains his mind in tranquility by practicing concentration meditation. Because of his clear knowledge about the process how suffering arises with concentrated mind, he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. As far as he examines this impermanence, his ignorance gradually decreases. Simultaneously, arising of other parts of dependent origination of his life also decreases. As the result of practicing this path, ignorance gradually decreases. At the same time suffering also decreases. He always tries to live with virtue and concentration, seeing insight as impermanence. Also, he is aware of the present moment. This is the way how ignorance ceases and other phenomena with ignorance gradually decrease.

*“Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā bhārahāro ca puggalo,  
Bhārādānaṃ dukhaṃ loke bhāra-nikkhepa-naṃ sukhaṃ.*

“The five aggregates are truly burdens,  
The burden-carrier is the person.  
Taking up the burden is suffering in the world,  
Laying the burden down is blissful.

*Nikkhipitvā garuṃ bhāraṃ aññaṃ bhāraṃ anādiya;  
Samūlaṃ taṇhamabbuyha nicchāto parinibbuto”ti.*

Having laid the heavy burden down  
Without taking up another burden,  
Having drawn out craving with its root,  
One is free from hunger, fully quenched.”



**May The Triple Gem Bless You!**

තෙරුවන් සරණයි !

**May All Beings Be Well, Happy & Peaceful!**

වෙත්වා සවිසත හැම කල් නිදුකී !

(Tuesday Dhamma discussion at Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena. 04/18/2017)